



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1201 NE Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100
PORTLAND, OREGON 97232-1274

October 9, 2009

Paul Fishman, Project Manager
ZRZ Waterfront Remedial Action Project
Northwest Ecosystem Services
3627 SE Madison St.
Portland, Oregon 97214

Dear Mr Fishman:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed cleanup project at the Zidell site on the Willamette River. Based on our review, the current proposal entails capping most of the sediment management area with a sand and riprap cap along with some vegetation along the bank.

The Willamette River is an essential component of the life histories of five fish species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Lower Willamette River itself provides important rearing and migration areas for Upper Willamette Chinook salmon and steelhead and Lower Columbia River Chinook salmon, steelhead, and coho salmon, all of which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. This reach of the Willamette supports core and genetic legacy populations returning to Willamette tributaries such as the Clackamas, McKenzie and Santiam rivers. Developing recovery plan products indicate that these populations are the building blocks upon which the recovery of these species will be based.

Historically, the Lower Willamette River was a braided, complex reach that provided a rich, shallow area for juvenile salmon to feed and rest during their migration to the ocean. High quality feeding and resting habitats for juvenile salmonids were vital to their survival in the estuary. This reach also provided spawning and migratory habitat for adult salmon and steelhead.

Habitat and water quality changes have contributed to the decline of salmon and steelhead runs. Salmon and steelhead habitat requirements include elements such as natural cover, water quality, water quantity, forage, floodplain connectivity and off channel refugia.

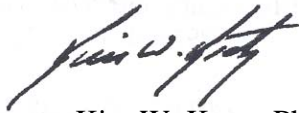


While the proposed remedy for the Zidell site on the Willamette River may prevent further contributions of contaminants from the Zidell site to the river, it does not adequately address the habitat needs of salmon and steelhead. In order to provide adequate habitat conditions for salmon and steelhead, we recommend the following changes to the proposed project design:

1. Dredge contaminated in-water areas and excavate contaminated bank areas.
2. Slope banks along the entire property to a 7:1 slope, plant trees in the riparian area and incorporate large wood that will provide refugia for fishes during high water.
3. Place a permanent conservation easement on the sloped and planted area to protect the habitat functions and values in perpetuity.
4. Place any trails or impervious surfaces outside of the designated "greenway" area so as not to preclude the riparian area from reaching its full ecological potential.
5. Provide additional upland treatment of stormwater outfalls that discharge on Zidell property to avoid recontamination of the cleanup area and prevent additional adverse effects on aquatic species.

The NMFS looks forward to working with you in the near future to make changes to the proposed project prior to submittal of a permit application to the Corps of Engineers. Working through potential issues in the pre-application can help the permitting and consultation process go more smoothly. If you have any questions please contact Christy Fellas, of my staff at 503.231.2307.

Sincerely,



Kim W. Kratz, Ph.D.
Director, Oregon State Habitat Office
Habitat Conservation Division

cc: Todd Alsbury, ODFW
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